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SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT, EUR, EUR/UBI, INL
DOJ FOR OIA FRIEDMAN

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [NL](#) [BIO](#)

SUBJECT: BIO INFORMATION ON NEW EU CT COORDINATOR

Classified by DCM Danny Russel for reasons 1.5 (b & d).

1. (U) On March 25, Dutchman Gijs de Vries was officially appointed by European government leaders as EU counter-terrorism coordinator. Below follows his biographic information.

2. (C) COMMENT: De Vries is known to Embassy officers as a quiet and serious man who has been active in trans-Atlantic policy issues, particularly through his involvement with the Netherlands Atlantic Commission. He is described as very smart, approachable, well versed in the EU ways of working and positive towards the US. Our Dutch contacts say he was selected to replace the former FM van Mierlo as the GONL rep to the IGC because he was "solid, but not a difficult to guide heavy hitter." We judge that he brings to his new job an in depth knowledge of the EU, an ability to recognize bureaucratic pitfalls, and a Dutchman's knack for teasing consensus out of a fractious group. We do not believe, however, that he has much knowledge of CT issues. END COMMENT.

3. (U) Gijsbert Marius (Gijs) de Vries was born in New York on February 22, 1956, and is a dual national. He is married to a Canadian and has two children. He studied at the University of Leiden and graduated with a degree in politics in 1981. For the next three years he was attached to the Faculty of Law at the Leiden University. In 1984 he became a member of the European Parliament, representing the Liberal VVD Party. Between 1989 and 1992 he was chairman of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Canada. In July 1994, he became chairman of the Liberal and Democratic group within the European Parliament. From 1998 to 2002 he served as State Secretary of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in the second "Purple" Kok Cabinet. From 2002 to 2003 he was government representative in the European Convention.

4. (U) His other previous functions include: board member of the Political Institutions Committee of Amnesty International; board member of the European Union Baroque Orchestra; the supervisory board of the Intercai telematics consultancy; advisory committee of the Amsterdam-Sarajevo City Link organization; and the advisory committee of the Anti-Racism Information Center. In addition, De Vries chaired the Netherlands Atlantic Association and was co-founder of the Transatlantic Policy Network.

5. (U) As State Secretary for the Interior, De Vries was responsible for contingency planning as well as for Netherlands Antillean affairs. His fellow politicians describe him as "intelligent, sharp, analytical, modest, and to-the-point." He is praised for his integrity, knowledge of languages and extensive European network. Because of his sober lifestyle, his colleagues in the European Parliament sometimes called him "le vent du nord (northern wind)." However, De Vries received praise more for his work as MEP than as Interior State Secretary. In 2000 and 2001 he was faced with two major disasters (fireworks explosion in Enschede and bar fire in Volendam), which he didn't handle very well, according to critics. De Vries was also criticized by the government of the Netherlands Antilles for forcing them to cut spending without keeping his promises for social support.

6. (U) In an interview in Volkskrant daily of March 26, De Vries admits he doesn't know much about intelligence services. De Vries: "I come from a different world. I do know a lot about European legislation and diplomacy, which is crucial for a sharper anti-terror policy." He notes that "liberty, democracy and security are core principles for a liberal like me. Terrorists are threatening these values and then I consider it my duty to defend them." De Vries observes that, as State Secretary for the Interior, he was closely involved in drawing up plans to prevent nuclear, bacteriological and chemical attacks in the Netherlands. As CT coordinator, De Vries also sees himself as a "driver, someone who tackles member-states failing to observe their commitments." According to De Vries, one of Europe's main shortcomings is implementing laws.

Sobel